

Lethologica

by lifeinahole

Category: Once Upon a Time

Genre: Friendship, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Emma S., Killian Jones/Captain Hook

Pairings: Emma S./Killian Jones/Captain Hook

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-15 06:00:19

Updated: 2016-04-22 02:32:45

Packaged: 2016-04-27 17:44:21

Rating: M

Chapters: 2

Words: 9,651

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Maybe if they could think of the perfect word to describe their friendship, everything else would fall into place. (Captain Swan au)

1. Chapter 1

a/n: will be T in the first chapter-ish, but rating will change soon.

* * *

><p>(noun) the inability to remember a word or put your finger on the right word

"Now, like, can you explain what you're doing?" the brochure reporter asks, her voice high-pitched and grating on his nerves. It's just past the dinner rush, so the kitchen is down to its normal buzz of activity instead of the frenzy that occurred a mere hour ago. Stations are getting cleaned up and restocked, food prep is happening all around the kitchen, and Killian, even though he's technically done working, is doing a demonstration of knife skills to the ditzy woman standing beside him.

He grits his teeth while keeping a smile on his face, putting on a charming air as he explains the difference between julienne and batonnet cuts.

"Wow! You're like, really good at that Kevin," the young woman gushes.

His sigh is internalized. It's not like they wear nametags in the kitchen. He isn't quite sure how she got 'Kevin' from 'Killian' but he's not going to correct her.

"Thanks, love. It's all about practice," he says, deftly continuing his cuts. The owners of the country club were insistent that the interview be done, and by being the Executive Chef, Killian was in charge of making sure the restaurant at this overpriced haven for people with too much money sounds as good as the food tastes. It's the one day a week he doesn't close the place down, and yet he's still stuck here as this vapid woman makes some comment about how Julianne is her favorite name, and if she had the choice to change her name, that's what she would change it to. He chuckles politely, but his mouth gets the better of him.

"I would change mine to _Killian_, since Kevin is just so dreary."

"Oh my _god_. What an exotic sounding name!"

Somewhere to his left, his sous chef, Will, chokes down a laugh and snorts, and Killian has to bite the inside of his cheek.

"Right. Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Well, we could talk about it some more over some drinks if you'd like." She reaches out and touches his forearm, exposed from the way his sleeves are pushed up to his elbows. In the past, these kinds of interviews have gotten him dates. This time â€

His phone chirps a few times, the bird call sounding sweet and innocent, and very unlike the person the ringtone is intended for. He was only mildly disappointed that an exhaustive search yielded no swan calls. He almost sighs in relief as he pulls out the phone, reading the text message quickly and hiding his grin with an apologetic look. Saved by his savior, even when she's the one in need of saving this time.

"I'm afraid I can't. Friend in need." He types out a quick response and hits send before motioning to whoever is closest, a quiet chef that he recently hired to join the team. "Can you take over here, please? This should last the night and anything else can get stored for lunch tomorrow." His request is met with a steady _"Yes, Chef"_ as the lad moves in to take over, and Killian slaps the boy on the shoulder with an approving nod. He turns back to the reporter and tries to plaster on the sincerest look he can. "I do apologize, lass. I hope you've got what you need for the article. It was a pleasure meeting you. If you have any more questions, please feel free to ask any of the other members of my staff. The men and women that work in this kitchen are all highly trained professionals that have a deep appreciation for their craft."

By the way her eyes light up and she begins scribbling furiously, he knows she's taken the bait for the quote and he gives her a brilliant smile when she looks back up at him. He's able to extricate himself from his position near the salad station soon after and drops into the cooler to grab a couple containers he filled earlier. While he intended them to be his lunch for a couple days, they will be much better appreciated where he's heading next.

As he's climbing into his car, chirrups sound out again and Killian quickly checks the message.

Swan: _Take your time. I'll be on my couch dying._

"So melodramatic," he mutters and starts his car. He has two stops to make before he'll reach his ailing friend, and surely she won't be dead by the time he reaches her.

He stops at the pharmacy first, trying his best to not run through the aisles to find specific items, before hastening back home to shower and change. The shower is short, so even after he dries off, he can still smell the faintest hint of the kitchen clinging to his skin. Luckily, his companion won't be able to tell, so he grabs his phone and his keys and heads back out the door. Five minutes later, he's parking behind the familiar apartment building of Emma Swan and letting himself in with the keys she gave him years ago.

Killian peers over the back of her couch, only to find Emma nested amongst what must be five blankets. He's not quite sure where blankets end and she begins. With only the television lighting the room, everything is cast in a weird blueish-white tint. He carefully sets a canvas bag down on the end table closest to him as he moves around the couch, keeping hold on the small bag from the pharmacy.

"You look ridiculous," he tells her as she tilts her head to try to see around him.

"_You_ look ridiculous," she responds, burrowing further into the blankets she has piled up around her. The couch appears to be swallowing her whole. Her nose is red, her eyes puffy, her face pallid, and she's sulking. He resists stealing her signature move of eye rolling.

"I brought your disgusting medicine." He holds up the requested item, knowing the protest is on the tail end of his statement.

"I don't want to take medicine," she whines, and he has to inhale deeply. The air fills his lungs and he counts to five slowly before releasing it through a thin aperture between his lips. He remembers how much of a pain in the arse she can be when she's ill, and he's thankful that this is only the third time he's had to attend to her as such.

"You told me when you texted me that I was to make sure you took the medicine, Swan. Don't fight me on this." He stares at the pouting face that blinks out from the fort she's built around her. "Swan."

"I know! Fine! _Geez,_ lay off already," she snaps. This time, he's pressing his lips together in an attempt at not laughing, because he does not wish bodily harm upon himself right now. He's brought back to the issue at hand when she coughs, the force of which rattles her whole body as she extricates herself far enough from the couch to sit up. "Gimme," she croaks out when the coughing subsides.

Killian sits on the edge of a cushion and pulls the bottle of green liquid from the pharmacy bag. He breaks the safety seal and pours a measure out for her, handing it over when he's sure it's the correct amount. She's grimacing the whole time, the furrow between her brows the obvious tell of her displeasure if it weren't for the sullen look of a child settling across her lips.

"Bottoms up," Emma grumbles mockingly, upending the little cup into her mouth and swallowing. She makes a loud sound of disgust as she hands it back to him. He moves to the kitchen, grabbing the second bag on his way before rinsing out the portion cup and placing it back over the lid.

He busies himself with the other bag he brought with him, storing the homemade soup and tea in their appropriate places before he wanders back to the living room to ask if she needs anything else. He rounds the corner, opening his mouth to question, but then promptly shuts it. Emma is already asleep again, the blankets abandoned around her waist. He scrubs his hand over his face once before moving closer and covering her back up.

Snagging the remote from the end table, Killian settles into the blue arm chair he knows so well and absently flips through the channels, keeping an ever-vigilant eye on his sleeping companion. Sometimes he tries to remember how this all began, but finds the whole thing hazy in his memory. What he does know is that it took a ridiculously short amount of time for Emma Swan and Killian Jones to go from strangers in a grocery store to best friends.

Four years earlierâ€|

It's been six years that Killian has been living in Storybrooke, hired as the executive chef of the Crystal Springs Country Club (which the proprietor of the space insists sounds much more appealing than just calling it the Storybrooke Country Club) after he graduated culinary school. As such, he knows damn near every face that lived in the town in the off season. The tourist season is about to start anew, and Killian has spent the day interviewing one of three candidates for the sous chef position in his kitchen in preparation for the onslaught of customers they'll get over the next few months.

This one was a gamble, a brand new chef with no formal training â€" a brand new chef that _would not_ be working in his kitchen, thank you very much. The interview went exceedingly well, however, the tasting sample had not. It had taken an hour for him to realize what exactly was wrong, when the burbles of his stomach had become too loud to ignore, but then he had taken all necessary measures to get home as soon as possible, with a quick stop at the grocery store first before making his way home.

A peek at Killian's basket reveals ginger ale, Tums, actual ginger, plain rice, and he's dragging his feet in the direction of the aisle that holds toilet paper so he can finally return to his apartment and die in peace. Judging by the picked-over appearance of the shelves, he surmises that they're getting a shipment in the morning. He only prays that the last item on his list is still in supply. He cannot afford to drive one town over for this item.

The package, tipped over on the floor next to what appears to be a soda explosion, is just a few feet away from him when a blonde woman appears at the other end of the aisle. Not a local, so he would normally be intrigued, except she's eyeballing the toilet paper and shifting to look at him, only to start rushing her cart over to where it sits.

"Wait, wait!" Killian calls out as soon as he realizes her

intentions, "I need that!" He hurries his steps as much as he can and reaches to rip the package away from her grasp.

"I need it, too!" she fires back, brows furrowing and hands tightening on the only thing he cannot leave without. "I just moved in, and they have one roll of sandpaper that came with the place, complimentary. I need it."

"My heart aches for you, really lass, but I ran out this morning. I have none."

"I'm on my period!" she blurts out, protectively clutching the package to her chest. She probably expects him to recoil, back away, apologize, whatever it is that most men do when the topic of menstruation comes up. But he has one better. "You're a guy. You can make it without for a night. Just use tissues or something."

Killian heaves a huge sigh, unwilling to expose his reasons but seeing no other option. He is usually a gentleman, first and foremost, but this is one time he cannot be. She did admit she has a roll at home, afterall.

"Split it with me," he proposes. Trying to hold off explaining one last time.

"What?"

"Just take half the rolls, I'll take the other half. We both walk away happy."

"One of these is damaged," she explains, turning the package to show where it has, in fact, been resting in soda. "So it'll be uneven. What then?"

"You can have the extra roll," he insists.

"I have never seen a dude fight so hard for toilet paper before."

He sighs again, groaning softly. "The young man I interviewed for a chef's position today did not properly clean his utensils. He did not get the job, and I've had to switch out shifts with someone tomorrow for sick leave." He explains it in a rush, hoping she just takes pity on him already.

She tilts her head to consider him, taking in his whole demeanor and facial expressions, his posture. Whatever she is looking for, she finds it. "You just trumped my period card with diarrhea. I'm impressed." She loosens her death-grip on the toilet paper.

Killian considers just snatching it and running for half a second before common sense kicks in. He wouldn't make it two steps without embarrassing himself, and he has already done enough damage for one meeting.

"Lass, I don't want to hurry you, but this is a time sensitive decision. I will buy the whole lot, just give me at least one roll out of it and we'll call it a day."

He watches as she bites her lip, trying to hold back laughter. He knows. This is one of those situations that will be hilarious one

day. But today is not going to be that day.

Finally, finally, she nods her head in the direction of the checkout and starts heading that way.

He upholds his half of the bargain, paying for the whole package and graciously accepting the two rolls she hands him after she finishes bagging her items. They part ways without even exchanging names, and Killian is just fine with that. He has little desire for her to know who he is, especially after having to use his digestive ailments as leverage to barter toilet paper from her.

But of course, small towns mean that the chances of running into her again are fairly good.

There she is at the park just two days later, jogging his usual path towards him as he's halfway through his run, and in the first lights of dawn, he realizes she's radiant. She catches sight of him before he can even think of changing course to avoid her, and the smile that lights up her face has him groaning.

"Nice to see you looking healthier, chef. Keeping hydrated?"

"Ha bloody ha. But please, my friends call me Killian," he responds, holding out a hand to her.

"Is that what we are now? Friends?"

"We're already privy to some intimate details, love. Might as well call ourselves friends and get it over with," he adds.

"I was lying about my condition that night. So really, you're the only one that gave away anything, Killian."

The hand that was held out to shake hers comes up to scrub over his face. The groan that comes out is long suffering, but still impressed that she was willing to go through such extraordinary lengths to get the product in question.

She snorts out a laugh and holds out her hand. "Emma Swan," she says, the smile lighting her face genuine and friendly. "I just moved here. I wasn't lying about that. It's nice to meet someone other than Granny. Not that she isn't great! Just, yeah."

Killian takes her hand, ending her rambling but not the smile. "Nice to meet you, Swan."

She smiles wider at his use of her last name. "Likewise. You know, your willingness to admit your weakness the other night was impressive. You might be â€" "

"Suave?" The interjection causes her to furrow her eyebrows, but there's humor dancing in her eyes.

"No, more like â€" "

"A dashing rascal?" He makes sure to wiggle his eyebrows as he says it.

"Uh, not quite. More like â€" "

"A handsome scoundrel?" Killian takes extreme pleasure watching her face battle it out between irritation and holding back laughter.

"I was going to say 'decent guy' but I think I'll amend that to jackass. You seem like a jackass, but I'm okay with that. See you around."

With that, she edges around him on the path and jogs off, leaving him with one last remark.

"Hope that toilet paper's treating you well!"

Killian's head drops back, an explosive sigh coming from him, as he knows from that point on, Emma Swan is going to be an interesting addition to his life.

Present Day

One thing was for absolute certain, Killian was correct on that assumption. Since that day, and all the subsequent times he ran into Emma in those early days, his life has not been boring. He would discover her comfort at the use of her last name, as a member of the Army Reserves and the newest deputy at the Storybrooke sheriff's department. She would find out that he was more accustomed to calling his chefs by last name as he worked beside them. They just fit.

While she was not there to tend for him during that particular instance, they have been there for each other for every other bump and bruise, every sniffle, sneeze, or otherwise.

It's still dark when Killian wakes up, the sound of Emma's coughs echoing around the small living room and rousing him to care for his friend. He stands up and stretches his limbs, sore from falling asleep in the armchair, especially since he didn't even recline the damn thing and just curled into a ball. Feeling a little more limber, he makes his way to the kitchen to measure out more of the liquid he knows from experience tastes like utter shite and leaves it on the counter in order to fetch Emma. The coughing subsided, she has burrowed back under all the blankets.

"You know how this works," he says sleepily. "You get soup and tea if you promise not to put up a fight when you're done eating." His voice is quiet and patient as he gently nudges the arm that's poking out of the blankets. One bleary eye cracks open and he knows she's scowling at him.

"You look like a pirate," he says cheekily, and she glares harder.

"I hate you so much right now I can taste it," comes the muffled response.

"You were able to string together a full sentence of hatred. Come on. Sit up and I'll go heat up your favorite."

A noise comes from under there somewhere, and he grins. He knows the vegetable soup from his own recipe is her weakness. It's the carefully perfected spices and homemade broth that make the simple

concoction what it is. Otherwise, it's the tail-end of vegetables left over from the prep on any given day he makes it.

"Yes, I brought the veggie mess. But you have to sit up and remain awake while I heat it up. Think you can manage?"

There's another noise, something that sounds a lot like a growl but also sounds like another derogatory remark, but then she's shoving the covers down and pushing herself into a sitting position.

"There's a good lass," he says, knowing full well she doesn't have the energy to hit him and her face shows it. Instead, she very deliberately lifts her middle finger. She sits there like that, blinking slowly and clearly trying to shake the sleep for a bit.

"I'll take that as a suggestion if you keep it up much longer, Swan," he tells her as he rises from the couch and heads off to the kitchen to re-heat some of the soup before she can react. He can hear the thump of her feet on the floor as she sluggishly drags herself after him and props against the doorway of the kitchen.

"You may be a jerk, but you're a lifesaver," she says. He can hear the gravel in her voice, and moves to find her kettle. Once it's filled, he lights a burner and places it on to heat. As that's going, he grabs a container out of the fridge and empties it into a saucepan, lighting another burner and setting that to simmer.

Killian is almost as familiar with Emma's kitchen as he is with the one he uses at the country club. He doesn't include his own kitchen because it has an electric stove and he barely uses the damn thing if he can avoid it. Instead, he finds inventive ways to use the oven, a separate griddle, his beloved grill, and a slow cooker (which Emma is always fond of). He's aware of her staring from the doorway, and he wants nothing more to tell her to just go sit down and he'll bring it to her when it's ready. He knows her better than that, though, knows better than to even try. She would probably just stand closer and breathe down his neck in defiance, and while he loves her, he is not prepared to deal with such tomfoolery tonight.

Instead, he carefully checks the temperature of the soup and pulls the kettle when it starts to whistle. It's all like a dance to him, much like it is when he's in the kitchen at work, much like it's always been to him with any kitchen he was ever in. He has vague memories of the terrors of culinary school. The voices of his instructors still ring in his ears, even now, when all he's doing is reheating something he made with nary a thought while he was prepping for the lunch rush this morning.

He forgets about Emma standing at the door to the kitchen, focusing on his movements as he pulls out a bowl and spoon. He grabs her favorite mug and drops the steeper filled with her favorite tea blend into it and pours the steaming water over it. Then he's back to the stovetop to tend the soup, stirring so nothing settles and sticks to the pan, tapping the spoon on the edge to shake the last drops of broth free. Delicate movements, not too hurried, not too wide, but not at a snail's pace.

When he turns again, Emma is staring with her jaw slightly dropped.

"You make it look like fucking art," she blurts out, and he can't help but chuckle. Killian is used to hearing this from her, because every time he cooks for her (soup and tea not excluded, apparently) she says much the same.

"It's just reheating and tea, darling," he responds. He was never very good at taking compliments from her. The bowl is warm, but not scalding, so he places it in his upturned hand, balancing the spoon between his fingers and placing a couple cracker packets on his wrist. Before grabbing the mug of tea, he removes the steeper and places it in the sink, prepared to clean it when he comes back to do the dishes. He nods at her to move back to the living room as he grabs the handle of the mug, letting her lead the way back to her makeshift sick bed.

Once Emma is situated with her food, he heads back to the kitchen to clean up. It's just like cleaning his work kitchen, the dance continuing as he puts away the rest of the soup, taps the used tea blend into the bin beneath the sink, carefully cleans each item he used, and then wipes down the entire counter before he's satisfied. He knows he'll still have dishes to tend to once Emma is finished eating, but a clean kitchen is a happy kitchen in his mind, so for now he's as happy as he can be with his best friend miserable in the next room.

He checks on her after he surveys his work, deeming the inspection complete before turning off all the lights except the one above the stove. She's still sipping at the tea, so he brings the medicine in to get it out of the way before she finishes the chaser. He watches as her eyes begin to droop closed longer and longer with each sip. When she places the mug down on the coffee table, he knows the medicine is winning out over her desire to stay upright, and so he helps her get settled again, all whilst listening to her whine and moan about her nose being too clogged on one side, or her ears needing to pop in that scratchy voice that sounds like she's been a pack-a-day smoker for twenty years, but it still somehow turns him on.

Nipping that thought off, he collects the dirty dishes from her dinner and heads to the kitchen to clean them. He fishes around the pantry for the vinyl gloves he keeps there before heading back in to the living room. Tissues and other scraps of trash are collected from the tables around her, disposed of before he grabs the anti-bacterial spray from the bathroom. Every surface gets wiped down before he moves on and does the same to the kitchen counters.

It's not that he has an unbreakable immune system, it's just that by the time Emma calls him, she's too far into the illness to be contagious anymore. It works out well for him. When he gets his yearly cold in two months, she'll be there taking care of him and the cycle will continue.

He's just about sanitized her whole apartment before he puts all the supplies away and washes his hands. Emma is snoring, her head tilted back on the pillow and mouth gaping open and a pang of affection goes so sharply through him that he almost can't stand it.

The bond between them is complicated at times, because there's obviously love. And sometimes it's platonic love and name-calling, and other times their eyes linger a little too long. Sometimes his hand stays on the small of her back when they're out. Sometimes she links her arm through his when they're walking and lets her fingers play in the space on the inside of his elbow. Sometimes, she talks in her sleep and he knows he's not alone in these feelings. But neither of them want to move beyond what they have, especially because if it ended, neither would be okay losing the other. He has this in mind, even as he urges her to sit up in her sleep. She complies, because she knows the soothing sound of his whispers even when she's unaware of everything else.

Killian manages to maneuver her to a position that will make it easier for her to breathe. He's content when her snore is just a mild thing, much less irritating to her already agitated throat.

He settles back into the recliner and channel surfs until he finds a movie, knowing he won't make it through half of the damn thing before he falls asleep, as well. Before he forgets, Killian grabs his phone from the end table and texts David, Emma's fellow sheriff and their resident father-figure. Killian only needs to say that Emma is sick before David assures him he'll take care of it, more than likely accessing the tree-like system of workers at the department to find coverage for her shifts. It takes a handful of minutes before David gets back to him and confirms the time off.

Realizing he's supposed to close at the country club the next night, he also sends a text to Will and calls in the payback of a favor. Will still owes him for the last time Killian had to spring him from the drunk tank. The response is griping, but affirmative. This is just a perk of calling the shots in the kitchen.

With his phone placed off to the side, Killian curls up in the recliner and manages to keep his eyes open for ten whole minutes before he's out like a light, Emma's softer snores and the hushed television acting as the sweetest form of lullaby.

2. Chapter 2

Three and a half years earlier—|

"We should just bang one out." The comment is unprompted. Emma just decides to say it during a commercial break because she can. It may have something to do with the ridiculous amount of NyQuil in her bloodstream, or the fact that she took it two hours ago and she's still somehow awake.

"Pardon?" To say that Killian doesn't look like he was expecting this particular conversation would be a bit of an understatement. His eyes are wide and quite a bit shocked, and pink is creeping up the tips of his ears in the most endearing way possible.

"You heard me. Bang one out and get it over with. You're hot. I'm pretty sure you think I'm hot. We can just have sex once and get it out of our systems and be bffs for-fuckin'-ever." Sound logic, if you ask her. Killian hadn't asked her, but she's giving her opinion on the matter anyways.

"And what pretext are you using for me thinking you're hot?"

"Probably the way you stare at my ass whenever I walk out of a room. I'm a cop. I notice things," she says while looking over her shoulder as she stumbles toward the kitchen. "Case in point," she adds when his eyes are trained to a spot below the waistband on her favorite sweatpants. She leaves him there in the living room, slumped in what he now refers to as "his" recliner, while she tries to figure out how she'll stand long enough to make herself a cup of tea.

It's as she's reaching for her favorite mug, the ceramic feeling heavy to her weakened arms and hands, that she realizes he followed. With ease, he grabs the mug from her and gently maneuvers her out of the way.

"Bloody stubborn woman, let me help at least?"

She doesn't answer, just crosses her arms over her chest and tries not to pout.

"Anyway, why bang one out, as you've so eloquently put it? Why not date? We've proven that we're compatible eating together, watching movies, long drives around the area. Having sex would just prove our dynamic in the bedroom," he points out.

"Because if we date, we'll probably break up. And you're too cool for me to lose because of something dumb like putting a label on it." Her voice drops considerably as she adds, "Lost too many for that dumb reason, anyway," which he either doesn't hear her say, or pretends that he didn't. Past relationships are touchy subjects for both of them.

It's clear that calling him cool has fed into his ego, though, because she can see him preening as he places the kettle on her stove. They're quiet, save for Killian's soft humming as he waits for the kettle to whistle. He's rummaging through the jar with tea packets in it while Emma chews her bottom lip in thought. She's brought back to the moment when Killian hands over a steaming mug, the first sip of which is scalding but immediately calming on her sore throat.

She watches in fascination as Killian methodically moves across every inch of her kitchen, cleaning up the items he moved around first before wiping down the counters. She thinks about protesting when he starts washing the dishes she'd failed to get done earlier in the day, but the tea seems to be soothing her to the point where she's not sure she could even make a convincing argument.

Of course, she doesn't have time to do so; he's done before she can even think of what she'd say. He finishes stacking the clean dishes in the strainer and turns to check her progress on the tea. To both their surprise, the mug is empty and cooling in her hands, and he plucks it from her grip to give it the same treatment as the other dishes before turning on her again.

"How're you feeling, Swan?"

"You never answered me," she says in lieu of an answer. Her mouth feels funny when she talks, though. Like her lips are made of rubber

that no longer wants to cooperate.

His hands come up briefly, scrubbing across his face before he rakes his fingers through his hair. It's getting longer than it was when they first met, and the urge to bury her fingers in it hits once every thirty minutes. Not that she's keeping track or anything.

"Swan â€" Emma. Here's the thing. I've done the whole friends with benefits thing. It ended with the girl defacing my car while I was at work and earned me the title 'Chef Douchebag' for longer than I care to remember."

"I'm not her," Emma protests weakly.

"You certainly are not," he comments immediately. She watches as a few different emotions pass over his face; there's disgust at the situation from his past, a solemn expression befalling him next, and then he lands on mischief. He looks back at her when that one has settled across his features, and Emma's curiosity is getting the better of her.

"What?"

Instead of an immediate answer, he moves closer to her, and if Emma was asked to describe the way he comes toward her, she would have to call it predatory, because there's no other way to explain how Killian is stalking across the kitchen to where she's propped against the counter. Their unstated personal bubbles nudge together, until he's standing toe to toe with her, his hands sliding along her waist and pulling her against him.

Automatically, her hands brace on his chest as his breath brushes the shell of her ear.

"Like this, Emma? Is this what you want right now? Shall I take you to your bed and show you how well I work with my hands? Shall I add the taste of you to the delicacies I've had on my lips?" His tongue darts out and flicks her earlobe, and she can't help the whine that comes out. "Would you want me to ravish you in every way I know how until you're panting and breathless, until you decide you'd rather not leave the bed for a few days when you can feel your legs again once I've fucked you senseless?"

Her body is flush against his at this point, and her hips rock forward involuntarily at the notion, and all at once her legs give out.

"I've got you," Killian tells her, his voice immediately soothing instead of teasing, and he does. With ease, he picks her up and carries her back to the cocoon she's been making on the couch all day. "I gave you the sleepy tea blend. You need to rest. Maybe when you're not delirious we'll come back to your suggestion, aye?"

She blinks sleepily in acknowledgement, feeling the way her whole body finally starts relaxing into the couch cushions. Killian smiles at her, kisses her forehead, and tucks her in before returning to his chair. She's just drifting off when she realizes that his body had been reacting as much as hers had during that moment in the kitchen, and she makes note to ask him about it again later.

Present Day

Emma's eyes open slowly, the obvious disuse making it a difficult process. The sun is too bright, her eyes too grainy, and her mouth distinctly tastes like something died in it overnight. She's not altogether surprised that she's in her bed, as Killian has a habit of corralling her to the more logical sleeping location rather than letting her camp out on the couch. She wonders if he stayed, or if he went home after he got her to bed. Vaguely, she remembers that he was slated to work the next day, and most of the weekend, so she figures it's safe to assume he went home.

It takes a considerable amount of effort to get out from underneath her covers, and once she's free, she takes a couple extra minutes to stretch. It feels like she's been sleeping for days, and her muscles are sore from being in what she's sure was a very attractive prone position on both the couch and her bed. She needs a shower, as well, but that can wait until she's had a couple strong cups of coffee and a hot meal.

All other traces of the cold seem to be behind her. She's breathing easily and smoothly, there's no lingering congestion, and other than some soreness in the muscles she probably strained while coughing, there doesn't seem to be anything left. _Bless Killian and the veggie mess_, she thinks as she wanders from her bedroom.

To her utter surprise, Killian is asleep on the couch, his favorite blanket covering him except where his socked feet and bare ankles stick out at the bottom. With exasperated fondness, she wanders over to look down at him, his features completely relaxed and the stress of the country club not sitting between his eyebrows like it normally does. Normally she can fight the instincts she has to reach out and touch him, but in the early light of this day, she doesn't fight it, instead letting her fingers brush the hair off his forehead in a gentle caress.

"So happy to see you upright, love, but you might want to put on some bottoms if we're going to be moving around the same space for at least an hour."

His ability to tell she's not wearing sleep pants is slightly absurd, especially because she failed to notice on her own. She _tsks_ and wanders back to her bedroom to remedy the situation and listens to the sounds of Killian rolling off the couch and immediately heading in to putter around in her kitchen. She should feel guilty over him catering to her, but she can also hear him humming as he works and she knows "â€" has been told on numerous occasions "â€" that he actually enjoys doing this. How she got so lucky, she'll never really figure out.

She has one leg in a pair of well-worn flannel pajama bottoms when the memory hits her of that first cold he walked in on, how they'd been friends for barely six months when the flu knocked her on her ass right before what was slowly becoming a weekly movie night. The way his voice sounded on the couch just then is reminiscent to the way it sounded in her ear that night, the semi-hardness of him pressing against her center as he teased her. It was all a diversionary tactic, meant to get her weak in the knees so she would finally go to sleep, but she thinks of those gravelly spoken promises

even after years of friendship and nothing more.

Harmless flirting is one thing. Pretending to be each other's significant other to brush off creepers at the bar is another. Jumping into bed and doing the number of things, by this point countless, that she's had dreams of doing to him would blow everything else out of the water.

But what ifâ€¦|?

With a firm shake of her head, she finishes sliding the pajamas up her legs, settling the waistband on her hips before she stalks back out of her bedroom with a clearer mind.

Killian is still cooking away at the stove. She wonders when he left to get groceries because she knows she didn't have half of the ingredients she sees in the pan when he got there after his shift. She worked through most of the contents of her fridge and pantry before sending out her pathetic call for help. Except for the first illness, where he all but waltzed in as the symptoms started showing themselves, she's always waited for the point of no return to text him. It's not anything against him personally, it's just the way she's always operated. She's not some fragile damsel in distress; she's been to Iraq. The only one who saves Emma Swan is Emma Swan.

But, as it turns out most often, the only one who feeds Emma Swan is Killian Jones. Her stomach lets out a loud rumble when the smell of bacon hits her, and she realizes that she's completely famished.

"Oh god, it feels like I haven't eaten in days. Is there any veggie mess left over?"

"Swan, you feel like you haven't eaten in days because you've been out cold for two days. Did you not look at your phone when you woke up?"

"What are you talking about?" Her phone is still plugged in next to her alarm clock. "Who the hell checks the date when they wake up? But seriously, what the hell are you talking about?"

"I've no idea what kind of people you're hanging out with, but you picked up some monstrosity of a flu virus, love. You've barely even been conscious since Wednesday night when I got here."

"And today is?"

"Saturday," he answers, all of this without ever glancing in her direction. He has to be fucking with her.

She finally retrieves her phone, expecting Thursday's date to flash up to greet her and maybe a message or two. Saturday. Ten missed calls, thirty e-mails, seventeen text messages. Dear lord.

She's in the midst of checking all of the various notifications, and a certain sense of calm satisfaction comes over her as she clears each little red bubble. While she's caught up in that, Killian guides her over to the table where he's already set her food and a cup of coffee. She blindly grabs her fork and starts digging in, only

pausing once the first bite is in her mouth. Then her eyes slide shut, the flavors sliding across her tongue, and the phone gets forgotten on the table next to her mug. She opens her eyes again as she goes for another bite and sees Killian's smug look staring back at her.

"Good?"

"Shut it, Jones. You know it's good," she says around a mouthful of perfect omelet. "So, my job?"

"Secured, in the hands of the ever-capable David Nolan. He filed your sick days and got all your shifts covered through Monday just to be safe."

"Thanks, dad," Emma mutters, sing-song and extremely grateful.

"I told him you'd call him when you were up and about."

"I'll call him later. Please tell me you haven't been here the whole time?"

Killian chuckles, finishing off the last of the food on his plate and swallowing before answering. "Of course not, love. Will doesn't owe me that many favors. Mary Margaret has been here a couple times to check on you." He pauses, tilting his head and looking at her through narrowed eyes. "She told me she had a very interesting conversation with you about her likeness to Snow White, and that the men that go into Granny's after their shift in the mine are all her dwarves. Do you have anything to say for yourself about this matter, Swan?"

The next bite of food goes down the wrong way, and Emma has to spend a minute hacking to clear her throat and try to speak. Fucking sleep talking, she thinks as she accepts the glass of water Killian holds out to her. Over-prepared bastard, is her next thought.

"Anyway, I open the kitchen tomorrow, but I have the rest of the day off. I was thinking we should â€" "

"Be fuck buddies?" She doesn't mean to say it. The words just sort of pop out before she has a chance to catch them.

"Wow," he drawls, "I want you to remember that this is the second time it's been you to bring this up. I was going to suggest we binge-watch whatever your Netflix queue is overloaded with since you're a workaholic. But you went there, Swan. That's all you."

"I'm just gonna go back to bed and pretend I never woke up."

"We'll just table the rest of that topic until further notice. Go shower, I'll clean up the kitchen, and I'll meet you in the living room in twenty?"

"Deal."

-x-

To her immense relief, he doesn't bring it up when she comes back in to the living room that day. In fact, he doesn't bring it up again. Instead, they're saddled with a strange tension sitting in the

periphery in the quiet spaces of their time together.

Two weeks later, she's surprised when her phone wakes her out of a dead sleep. She's sure that she put on the 'do not disturb' setting before going to bed, which means Killian's called her multiple times to get it to ring. A very drunk Killian and a thirty-second conversation later, Emma is throwing a sweater over her tank and sliding into boots.

She pulls up to their frequent bar, a place she has spent many a night she doesn't fully remember surrounded by Killian and the group of misfits they've spent years collecting, and climbs out of the car in order to fetch the man in question and whatever other of the 'boys' require a ride home.

"_Em-_ma!" If she weren't already aware of his state of inebriation, it's the way he says her name that gives it away. The first syllable is higher pitched and short, while the second is drawn out, as if her name has more than four letters. The second giveaway is the smell of alcohol rolling heavily from his entire being. She's pretty sure if auras are things, and if they get drunk too, then his is the amber of the rum he's probably consumed and she's surprised the whites of his eyes aren't the same color.

She bites her bottom lip against a smile, because it's 1:30am and she had finally been asleep after what felt like the longest day of work ever before getting his phone call(s), his words slurred, his accent thicker than normal as he explained that there was a need for a sober driver if it wouldn't be too much trouble. She would never admit that for him, it was always trouble, but not of the inconvenienced kind. She reminds herself that she's to be playing the role of put-out friend and attempts to school her face into something sterner.

"Come on, Stumbles. Let's get you guys home." She grabs his wrist as she says this, hoping the rest of Boys' Night follows, because she's not even bothering to turn around and look. She tugs him along through the bar where some twenty-something brunette has taken it upon herself to croon out "Don't Cry Out Loud" to the ten people remaining. Off key, of course.

Despite the fact that Emma is walking a straight line, she can feel the wobble, and she looks back to see Killian staring at his feet as he moves, and David holding his other hand, with Robin behind him and Will bringing up the end of their improvised snake. They all slither in a line behind her, back and forth, and she chokes down another laugh at the sight as she leads them out of the bar. She heaves out a sigh of relief when she sees the cab waiting outside the bar, thankful that she's not the one that has to cart all of them home. It's even more of a surprise when David breaks their little chain and heads straight for the taxi with the other two.

"This is us," he claims triumphantly, herding Will and Robin into the backseat. He turns back to Emma and Killian still standing just beyond the door. "Emma. Thank you for rescuing us from osta- the untri- from obstracles course. Drive safely. We love you."

Without another word, he clambers into the front seat of the cab, waving enthusiastically through the window as he attempts to buckle himself in. As the cab pulls away from the curb, Emma becomes all too aware that she's no longer holding Killian's wrist, but that he's

taken it upon himself to link his fingers between hers, their palms pressed together in a comfortable grip. The butterflies in her stomach make a steep swoop down to her feet when his thumb brushes along hers in a gentle rhythm that he seems to be entirely unaware of. She runs the fingers of her free hand over her forehead and into her hair before once more pulling him along, this time in the direction of her car.

"They made me sing karaoke," he whines once they've settled into her car. He's fruitlessly attempting to buckle himself in, and can't seem to hit the mark no matter how hard he tries. After his third miss, she takes pity on him and grabs the belt and quickly secures it.

"They didn't make you do shit," she says as she fastens her own seatbelt. "No one loves the attention of an audience more than you, so don't try to sell me that crap." She's smiling when she says it, the words carrying no malice at all, but he still drops his head in shame.

"You are correct, my lovely Swan."

She can't fight the blush that creeps into her cheeks at the endearment. Fucking rum.

He mostly settles in for the rest of the drive, but when he realizes she's driving in the direction of his own apartment, he balks, insisting instead that he needs to stay on her couch due to its "Magical Hangover Curing Abilities," which is utter bullshit, but she doubles back to go to her place instead. Getting him up the flight of stairs that leads to her quaint, second-story apartment is a hellish nightmare.

She spends a full minute dragging him away from the pile of shoes outside one of the ground-floor apartments. They belong to a young couple that has recently moved in and made her weekends a living nightmare, but as the older and wiser upstairs neighbor, she needs to not pull pranks on them. Which is exactly what she tells Killian in an angry whisper to stop him from pissing on the whole pile. Instead, she lets him knock over one pair of dirty work boots before she drags him up the staircase.

He ends up standing behind her as she shuffles her keys, trying to find the one for the deadbolt first, and she startles when his head drops to her shoulder. His hands find purchase on her hips and she can feel him inching closer in the scant amount of space that's left between them. They're demonstrably affectionate at times, yes, but this isn't for the sake of warding off unwanted attention at a bar, and it's not a simple cuddle on the couch. This is Killian lifting his head just enough to run his nose along the exposed part of her neck, just above the collar of her coat. This is his hands tightening their grip right below her ticklish spots.

"Swan?"

Her heart is hammering in her chest, a quick reminder that it's been a long time since she's gotten out to scratch that itch, and that she's proposed twice now that she and her very attractive friend sleep together, even if one of those times was several years ago.

"Yeah, sorry. Getting there, hang on." As quickly as she can manage, she unlocks the deadbolt, unlocks the main door lock, and twists the knob to let them into her apartment.

Killian almost falls forward at the sudden shift, stumbling into the dark entrance just behind her. She shuts and re-locks everything behind him, keeping an eye on her less-than-steady friend as he toes off his shoes on the mat by the door. He rests heavily against the door for a moment when he finally succeeds, and she moves around efficiently while he catches his bearings, leaving her own boots on the mat, hanging up her keys, her coat, her purse, and stuffing her beanie into the basket designated for such things in the space below where her keys hang.

He's still leaning there when she turns back to him, and Emma raises an eyebrow. The entire event is curious, but so many of his current behaviors are unlike his usual ones. Either he's much drunker than he originally appeared to be, or there's something going on below the surface that he hasn't clued her in on yet. Instead of waiting for his next move, she moves forward and pulls him away from the door. As he unsteadily moves toward the couch, she grabs his leather jacket. He rolls his shoulders just enough that it slides down easily, and she moves away again to hang it up next to her own. When she turns this time, he's collapsed onto the couch, mostly face down, with one arm hanging off the side. His legs are barely on the damn thing, either, and she tilts her head in curiosity before going to fetch his blanket.

"Do you really mean it, Swan?" he asks when she returns.

"Mean what, Jones? I haven't said anything since I called you an attention whore. In which case, yes, I am a firm believer in that." She rests the blanket on the arm of the couch as she moves around to urge his legs up. With some effort, he pulls them up and rolls to his side to regard her.

"Bang one out," he quotes from long ago. The words still sound strange coming from him, and knowing him as well as she does now, she thinks he'd probably have some overly elegant way of putting it. _A tryst_, her memory supplies, having heard him say it once when he was describing how he and his former girlfriend, Tink, got together in the first place.

'Was nothing but a tryst at first,' he'd told her one night, a pint of ice cream between them at the breakfast bar in his apartment.

Which sort of (not really) brings her back to the situation at hand. She carefully settles onto the side of the couch, resting against his abdomen as she tries to figure out what she even wants to say. He keeps his hands to himself, curling them beneath his cheek and closing one eye to keep her in focus.

She snorts out a laugh, unable to even think about having this conversation with him while he's as intoxicated as he is.

"Go to sleep, Captain Hook. We'll delay this conversation again, until a time when we aren't sick or drunk or sleep deprived or trying to win pirate lookalike contests."

He digs his left hand out and crooks his index finger, letting out one faint '_aargh_' before he lets his other eye close. She stands and grabs the blanket, unfolding it and draping it over him. When she's done, she leans over to kiss him on the cheek but he shifts, and suddenly she's kissing him. It's barely a press of their lips while she makes a surprised '_mm_' in the back of her throat, and then she's straightening. Killian's eyes are still closed, a peaceful little smile on his lips even as she recognizes the signs of him succumbing to the alcohol in his system.

She licks her lips and tries to ignore the fact that every nerve in her body is now full-forced singing as she heads to her room and firmly shuts the door. If it weren't for the lingering taste of rum, she could pretend it never even happened. She still could, if she wants to. The problem, which is startlingly clear as she thinks of his lips soft against hers, is that she doesn't want to.

End
file.